177. metic book for an old man called Samuel who produced a series of swot
87 books on various subjects, beautifully tabulated books with questions
876 and answers, invaluable for examinations and used even in my day when we and our school teachers whisked them out of sight of Education Inspectors who came on the prowl for just such unprogressive methods of education. He also went across to the American Mission School where quite often the teachers were more Christian and painstaking than brilliant, to help old Teacher Nellie with Geometry riders, and in this way he met my mother.

873 My parents could not get married as soon as they left school. My
593 father had first to go to the University, which consisted then of Rangoon
562 College, affiliated to Calcutta University, and then he felt he must work
582 to buy my grandmother a big enough plot of paddy land so that her two youngest sons would not need to look after her in Ye, but could come into the world like my father. He now felt that they should not be denied the wonderful opportunities which he had found. My father did go to College, but had passed only his F. A. (corresponding to Intermediate) when he heard that my mother was now going out to teach in a school at Thaton, and that she was having to put on a European gown and hat in order to be less conspicuous, because at that time no Burmese Buddhist ladies went out to work. My father left his studies at once and got a job in the same school to look after her, and it was only after some months of persuasion by Grandfather and my mother that he consented to leave and look for a better paid position.

● 647 He managed to obtain a myookship in the Government Service,
177. which is a junior administrative post but considered a very good job for
65 Burmans in those days. In this job he could save enough to buy Grand-
582 mother her paddy land, after which he and my mother would get married. But my father with his good looks, his teetotaller habits, and his myookship, was considered a desirable son-in-law by many people, and other parents were not like Grandfather; they would try to engage the young man's affections for their daughters. I am sure my mother spent the next three years in some anxiety, as she heard stories of the young myook's gay and happy life in such far-off towns as Toungoo and Shwegyin. But one day the children dashed up to her with a telegram; she opened it and read *Gyi will you marry me.* My mother, who has never shown any excitement as far as I can remember, got up very quietly and went to her chest of drawers. She took out ten annas in change, and wired back *Yes.*

584 Soon after this my father arrived amidst great excitement on the part of my mother's family and a pretence of complete ignorance on Grandfather's part. My aunts expected an explosion from him when

1: Mi Mi Khaing 1-5 (no date) 1946 AP1 Burma
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CHAPTER FOUR

647 565 177. 65 BY the time that I was about four years old my father had become a Subdivisional Officer in the Civil Service, and our family had joined the ranks of what has now come to be known as the *min-kadaw* class, an *a-so-ya min* being a government official and *minkadaw* the wife of a *min*. The minkadaws usually referred to were in the great majority the wives of officials of the Burma Civil Service, Class II, and by the time that we were passing through our childhood and adolescent years they already formed a very definite stratum in Burmese society. We children now comparing notes with the children of the minkadaws posted as far apart as Tavoy and Myitkyina can find common characteristics in all the households, from domestic commodities and meal habits to social conventions and standards of wealth. It is as though a new upper middle class has grown up, complete with snobberies, in what was formerly a classless Burmese society, but a class that still keeps itself quite apart from the European gymkhana life of the district towns.

631 647 344 The houses which I can remember, when my father was a Subdivisional Officer in the subdivisional towns of Zigon and Myanaung where he was in charge of the subdivision, or in the divisional headquarters town of Magwe where the whole hierarchy of min from the Commissioner downwards were present, or in the district headquarters town of Maubin where the min ranked down from the Deputy Commissioner and my father was Headquarters Assistant, all bore certain uniform features. They were all wooden, two-storied and large, with a sufficient number of big rooms to have a dining-room and an office room below, a sitting-room above the portico and two big bedrooms, besides little verandahs and odd rooms. They all had a front staircase for common use and one or two ladder-like staircases behind for watermen, sanitation and servants. The kitchen was about 20 yards away, connected by a covered passage, and at the back of the large garden or compound was the *tanya*, a row of rooms for men servants and Indian [351] servants. The garden in front was usually modest owing to frequent changes of occupants, but a minimum amount of flowers for daily vases on the altar had always to be cultivated, and fruit trees were prized highly, guava, mango, marian or citron.

592 357 Unlike most Burmese households we did not have any aunts or other relatives staying with us, but we had our full quota of domestic

517 along a ledge or parapet, and walked quietly round the pagoda with the paved stones so cool beneath our bare feet, while the grown-ups still prayed silently. As soon as they finished and got up, it was the signal to release our spirits and bound away to the far corner where the servants were already beginning to unpack the pots and arrange three stones around for each fire. We were allowed to cut up onions or chillies until we got bored, and spent the rest of the morning playing games or exploring the country around, coming back to find a meal miraculously cooked, with curries in lacquer dishes and rice in banana leaves. After the meal, mats were spread in the breeziest spot, and we lay down beside the grown-ups who told beads and talked by turns.

517 Garden orchards were another source of deep long whole-day joy.
● 647 The Burmese *u-yin* is usually translated as orchard, but after seeing
351 English apple and cherry orchards I must translate it more fully. An u-yin is more arboreal and leafy; also one must enjoy it positively, that is, there must be in it a bamboo or light wooden house. In a hot climate an u-yin raises visions of shade; cool dark shade, leaves, only a few flowers unless they are of flowering trees, eating of the fruits and vegetables while there, and lying on a mat in the afternoon breeze. None of the a-so-ya mins could possess u-yins or gardens like this where they were posted, because their stay was so transitory. But the education officer,

that is, the D.I.S. (District Inspector of Schools), whether active or retired, was usually more permanent and could dig his toes in more happily. The social relationship was also ideal. Earning less than the other officials, he could yet offer them this rich hospitality of natural pleasures.

When we were in Maubin the D.I.S. was our friend U Taik Wan. He and his family of ten sons and daughters had the u-yin developed to its fullest. He had a low large house where the river took a bend and had fenced in this bed with bamboo stakes and a diving platform. The garden orchard stretched away from the house to a bamboo hut at the far end, with open verandahs under the trees. The speciality of his orchard were his sweet-sour marian trees. The marian is the *bonea Burmanica*, common to Burma and northern Assam, where it forms an ideal appetizer for the heat-drowsy inhabitants. It is sour, of a sharp biting sourness which now makes my mouth water with longing. It is too sour to eat except doused in strong salt sauce or fish paste, salt being our antidote to sourness, in which I differ from the English idea of cooking, for salt combines and merges in with sourness whereas a pound of sugar thrown into a gooseberry tart would still leave it too sour for me. The marian is a small fruit, green when young and orange-yellow when ripe, with a pretty purple seed which has given its name to the Burmese colour "mauve". There is a sweet variety which is not popular. Sometimes, however, a prize tree is found which produces a sweet-sour marian, a sour fruit with its sting taken off. Such a tree should be treated with the greatest care; its fruits must never be salted or pickled as sour fruits are treated, because the "sour" use would communicate itself to the tree by what may be called sympathetic magic. Rather, my mother made jam (with sugar) of these marians, for the improvement of U Taik Wan's tree.

My mother was very punctilious about such things; the girl servants were never allowed to pluck the citron leaves for our salad because a woman in menstruation makes the tender leaves of the citron tree curl up and lose their succulence when she plucks them. U Taik Wan had a row of sweet-sour marian trees which he guarded from flying foxes by throwing a net across one face of them, showing a wall of these creatures hanging head downwards, to passers-by.

Our pyaw-pwè-sas at the Taik Wan's always began with a lot of water-fun. We never used bathing dresses, but adapted our longyis for swimming. This longyi is shaped and wrapped, like the more famous sarong, at the waist normally, but women and girls take it above the bosom when they discard their jackets. This enables all our poorer women to bathe with perfect decorum at public wells and streams.

associated with fresh country mornings, dew on the grass and smoke from the wood fire, men and women with cheroots and red striped blankets flung over them grouped around the fire. A favourite way of eating kaukhnyin is to put it with a little salt into a bamboo stick that has been cut with a knotch to form a bottom, stop the top with a cork of paper and then roast it over a fire. By the time the stick is about to scorch, the rice is cooked and stuck together in a long tube held by a thin white skin from the inside of the bamboo. Cracked open and eaten with fried chicken it is delicious clean food; the best "kaukhnyin legs" and fried chicken were produced at Letpadan, in Tharawaddy district, for many years running. Other kaukhnyin eaters steam it with beans, pile it on lacquer trays and walk around to sell it in the early mornings about six o'clock, serving it on banana leaves, with sesamum salt and shredded coconut sprayed on top.

But htamanè is made ceremonially only once a year. Work parties of women used to come to our house the day before and sit under the trees cutting coconut and ginger into thin slices, shelling peanuts, picking husks out of the kaukhnyin, and winnowing this and the sesamum in cane trays. At about four the next morning my mother and the rest of the household got up, and helped by one or two of the young men from other houses, they made fires under the trees, put the kaukhnyin in big pans, with oil and all the prepared ingredients, and cooked if for hours, taking turns to stir the sticky mixture all the time while the others sat around the fire smoking and talking. In the early morning we put the htamanè into dishes for the monasteries and all the houses in the neighbourhood, into tins for sending away to relatives in other towns, and store-jars for keeping in the house to eat between meals.

These accounts of our life in the districts are of ceremonies and celebrations so far because I was a child in those days. My parents had their own pattern of life with a background of work. My father, as I have said, belonged to the Burma Civil Service, Class II. The administrative services in Burma included three grades of Civil Services: the I.C.S., which became the Burma Civil Service I after separation from India, the B.C.S., which then became B.C.S. II, and the Subordinate Civil Service. These three services supplied the executive administrative officers who were placed in charge of the various-sized units of administration, helped in their government by judicial administrative officers of corresponding ranks, and by officers for police, forests, education, excise and other public services for which a separate recruitment was made.

The myookship which my father obtained in 1912 was the most junior of these posts, usually filled by members of the Subordinate Civil

• 647 631 Service and beginners in the B.C.S. II. It entailed the charge of a unit of administration known as the township, a collection of village tracts, with headquarters at a town of about two to five thousand inhabitants. The township officer supervised the administration of villages and the land system, helped in the suppression of crime and revenue collection, acted as government registrar, and carried out duties assigned to him by his senior officer. This was the Sub-divisional officer, in charge of two or three townships. Two or three sub-divisions were in turn grouped into a district under a Deputy Commissioner, a post attainable by members of the B.C.S. II before their term of service if they showed talent, but more often held by members of the B. C. S. I. Three to eight districts were grouped in divisions under a Divisional Commissioner who had civil and revenue powers and was responsible to the Governor for every department of public service except special branches directly under the control of the central government. There were eight Divisions in Burma.

When my father was an S.D.O. he had various magisterial, civil and revenue powers. Besides exercising these duties in the sub-divisional headquarters, he toured around the sub-division for about ten days in the month and we sometimes accompanied him. When he was stationed at Myanaung we went to Ingabu where my mother had good friends, Pauktaing where there was a great and revered Image of Buddha, Kyangin which had a thriving silk-weaving industry. In a township headquarters like Kyangin we met only the Township Officer although the town was divided into blocks or wards, each of which was under a headman whom my father also had to meet.

647 631 177. 63 621 But in a village like Pauktaing we came directly into contact with the headman, the *thugyi* or "elder person", who, as a source of local authority over villagers, is a carry over of the administrative system under the Burmese kings. The headmen in those days were properly described by their name of thugyi. They were chosen by the villagers and assisted in their duties by a group of elders. The headman distributed the burden of the revenue that was due from the village among the villagers and collected it, being allowed a percentage of the collections. He was the village magistrate and sometimes the village judge. New settlers in the village had to obtain his permission to take up abode. The office tended to become hereditary, and in those times when there was little contact between the central government and the local administration of the peasantry, the authority of a good headman was a strong influence that extended over more than one village. In present times, however, each village has been established as a separate administrative unit under one headman; the Township Officer, the Sub-divisional

Officer have appeared as higher sources of authority which are present not far away, and the village headman has lost much of his standing as elder person responsible for law and order, retaining chiefly his position as tax-collector. This is to the loss of village administration.

As a-so-ya mins, men like my father had more power and prestige than they had money. The salary of a B.C.S. II Officer, which ranged from Rs. 300/- to Rs. 900/-, was enough to ensure easy living and a certain amount of saving for old age, but in the place of the expensive carpets, glass, silver, uniformed servants and tinned foods which we saw in English officials' houses, they had to spend what might seem to foreigners a disproportionate amount on two items: jewellery for the women and financial help to relatives. Jewellery is not a vanity for a Burmese woman but an article of dress, worn both day and night, in varying degrees according to whether she is working or out on pleasure. The word for jewellery does not include any description of gems, but is *let-wut let-sa*: wear for the arms and such. When servant girls enter a household the humblest of them is given a gold chain to hang around her neck or a bangle for her wrist. Thus among the classes who have any money to spare beyond that for mere sustenance, from the more affluent cultivators, the small traders and shopkeepers and clerks, to "rich" land-owners, mill-owners and government officials, a great amount of money is spent on jewellery. Not to have any would be an unbearable shame.

A complete set of jewellery for a well-dressed woman comprises the following articles, all worn together when attending shinbyus, ear-boring and marriage ceremonies, official functions and numerous other occasions. For the hair a *sado*, a hairpin with a single large diamond on the end; a comb with teeth of gold and a row of diamonds set closely along the back of the rim; a *sein-pan gaing*, a gold hairpin with a cluster of flowers to hang and dangle, set with diamonds. These articles have the gold parts embedded in the knot of hair and only show the diamonds. Round the neck are worn the *lè-gat*, a narrow gold collar set widely with diamonds, fitting like a vice; below this a double row of small pearls tied tightly behind with red tassels; the *lè-ton* "trembling necklace"—a "choker" necklace—sitting so that little chains set with diamonds hang from it all round the neck and tremble; a chain with a diamond locket below this. In the ears are worn single diamond studs. On the jacket five diamond buttons, attached to gold rings set with diamonds, fasten the button loops. On the wrists and hands diamond bracelets and as many rings as possessed, of rubies, emeralds and sapphires set with diamonds are worn. A young girl also wears hollow anklets of gold round her ankles. In addition to the above, the richer minkadaws and wives of big traders possess corresponding pieces of rubies, emeralds and

1: Mi Mi Khaing I-5 (no date) 1946 AP1 Burma
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CHAPTER NINE

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MEN of my father's generation followed a definite pattern in the stages of their lives. They passed their infancy and early childhood playing around their mother's knee, but as soon as they were capable of receiving spiritual influence and training, the atmosphere of the monastery and the men of religion enwrapt them. Thus their spiritual life began at the monastery. After they left it they spent many stages in the world of offices and money-earning, but none of them could be reconciled to this as the final stage of their lives. They hoped to leave this when they were fifty or soon after, and go back full circle to spending the twilight in the atmosphere of religion, before they went out finally in childish decay to another and better existence. The retirement from the civil service was therefore a very important point in my father's life. The English term "pensioner" has come to be incorporated into popular Burmese usage, as *pin-sin tha-ma*, so full of meaning is it. Most men at this time look about for a town which will ensure easy living and performance of meritorious deeds, in which to settle down. We went back to Thaton because of our family connections, but, as it happened, Thaton was also the most noted town in Burma for the settling of pin-sin tha-mas; it was indeed the pensioner's paradise.

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Thaton is a very old town. From the fifth to the tenth century A.D. it flourished as the centre of a Buddhist kingdom of Talaings, while the greater Burmese capital at Pagan was still without the true faith. There the Burmese King and the people were under the sway of a body of monks called the Aris, whose hypnotic influence was exercised through the practice of ritualistic observances contrary to the teachings of the Buddha and of which they set themselves to be the high priests. To this capital came a Buddhist monk from Thaton called Shin Arahan. He came into the presence of the King with his staff and a simple robe and the stamp of an ascetic life on his face, but also with the serene assurance that a monk's life ennobled any man beyond all other men, for he went up to the throne of the King and sat upon it. King Anawrahta asked, "What is the true teaching of this holy religion, and where can one get its Books?" Shin Arahan then told the King of the Buddhist kingdom of Thaton and the sacred scriptures which were there. The King of Pagan sent messengers to Thaton for copies of the scriptures, but the proud King at Thaton would not yield them. The

Burmese King thereupon went down with an army which succeeded in carrying off King, Clergy and Scriptures from the unfortunate city of Thaton. King Manuha of Thaton languished on a throne seat of bare stone in Pagan, but the religion thrived and blossomed into the grandeur of the thousand pagodas and temples of Pagan, so that even today Burmans can see the white majesty of the Ananda and rejoice in the way their kings received and enshrined their faith. With king and religion transplanted, Thaton fell into a decline, and soon lost her trade also, for the sea coast extended and left Thaton a dry inland town. However, [133] it never lost its reputation as the old seat of religion; its rich geographical features also remained—a soil which can grow rice, fruits and plantations of other crops in abundance; its easy access to the big towns of Moulmein and Rangoon; the Martaban Hills which were ranged behind the town, and over which waterfalls tumbled down to cross the red laterite roads as streams of clear water.

Most pensioners, by the time they retired, had already established some form of livelihood other than the drawing of their pension. My father owned two rubber plantations just outside Thaton, each about 110 acres. Burma is not one of the chief rubber producing areas of the world, but the country round Tenasserim is suitable for rubber-growing and produced the greater part of what was, in 1939, a total of over 22,000,000 lbs. Thaton district contained about 15,628 acres of rubber, between big planters and many small plantations like ours.

My parents started our estates in the form of clearings which they planted with the help of my grandfather in about 1910, before my father became a myook, and were in time to reap the riches of the great boom in the post-war years, when they were selling rubber at Rs. 2/- per lb. and my father bought a motor boat and my mother many diamonds. As a Government servant my father was not allowed to work at any trade, so he handed over the possession of the estates to my mother's sister, our Kyi-Kyi Lon, who all her spinster life has devoted herself to my mother and to us. She worked the estates for us and, in the awful years of the slump that followed, we quite forgot indeed that we owned any such things as rubber plantations, for the only connection which my father ever had with them, the receipt of money from Kyi-Kyi, disappeared completely. In 1935, however, when my father retired, the market for rubber had just begun to stir into being, the Burma Rubber Committee allowed planters like us an annual quota of about 20,000 lbs or two-thirds of our production, which we hoped to sell at roughly Rs. 7 per lb, and my father was free to work them again. He had no technical knowledge and the minimum amount of business acumen, and I never ceased to wonder how money could come to us in this haphazard way. We

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

lata for the original flavoured earth, and of Thale rice for the leguminous creeper, desire arose among them, and four of the men took the four women to wife. The fifth man naturally resented being left compulsorily single, and pelted the happy couples with stones on their marriage night. Sympathy with the feelings of this archetypal bachelor has perpetuated the stone-throwing by the lu-byos down to the present day, and if there is no dearth of eligible spinsters in our times, the lonely bachelor may be allowed to express his envy of his friend's bliss without being accused of anything but gross cupidity.

After marriage the couple almost always live for two or three years in the house of the bride's parents, the son-in-law becoming one of the family and contributing to its support. Setting up a separate establishment, even in Rangoon, where the young husband is a clerk in an English office, is looked upon with disfavour as a piece of pride and ostentation. If the girl is an only daughter, she and her husband stay on till the old people die.

Polygamy is recognised and permitted, but practically does not exist now in British territory. A man with more than one wife becomes a subject of common talk, and a native official now living is well known all through the delta as the myo-ok with twenty wives. In native territory the right to have several wives was equally little used in practice. Many of the high officials who travelled about over large districts had wives in almost all the towns they visited —a custom in great measure induced by the rule which provided that the mayā-gyi, the chief wife, had to be left in Mandalay as a hostage for the fidelity of the official. But the great bulk of the people are, and always have been, monogamous. King Mindôn had fifty-three recognised *wives*, of whom thirty-seven survived him. His children numbered one hundred and ten, of whom upwards of fifty survived him. Besides the wives, like Solomon, he had numerous concubines. So, indeed, have many lesser people.

The forbidden degrees are few. Marriages with mother, daughter, sister, and half-sister, aunt, grandmother, and granddaughter, are forbidden, but none else. A son may marry his stepmother; it is expressly mentioned in the

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

parties and pleaders in a suit. 14. Fearlessness in deciding cases, or being lion-hearted.

The supreme court in Burma was the Hlutdaw constituted of four wungyis, the chief ministers of state, who held their meetings in a hall within the palace, which took its name from the court. Each wungyi (great burden) had its wundauk (prop of the burden) as an assistant to sit with him in court. These wundauks formed the third rank of ministers, under the four atwinwuns (inner burdens), who were a kind of household ministers, or privy councillors, and sat in a special court, called the Byadeit, also in the palace. The latter had nominally as their chief duty to deal with the monopolies which Thibaw Min set himself to establish in such abundance. But as any man, no matter what special education or preparation he might have had, was considered eligible for any post, political, military, civil, or judicial, so both the Hlut and the Byadeit conducted all manner of business, from the external relations of the country to ordinary criminal or civil appeal cases sent up from the yôndaw, the criminal court, where the myowuns (city burdens), usually two in number, sat daily; or from the tayayôn, the civil court, where two tayathugyis (great men of the law) presided. In either of these inferior courts it was not at all uncommon for a wundauk, or even a wungyi, to attend and investigate important cases. But original suits were also frequently heard before the Hlut, and many cases were decided by the wungyis or any of the subordinate officials in their private houses. Formerly [651] indeed this was the chief source of their salaries, for costs to the amount of ten per cent on the property under dispute went of right to the judge. The late king instituted the custom of fixed salaries, and Thibaw Min retained it, but neglected to pay the money. It will thus be seen that law matters, even in the capital, were carried on in a very casual, haphazard sort of a way. There was no attempt at a distribution of public business into departments, and each individual wungyi took his part in deliberations on all kinds of subjects with as much confidence as if he were an expert.

If the capital displayed a lack of system, there was

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

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If the capital displayed a lack of system, there was certainly little to be expected from the provinces. The same general system prevailed in the separate districts. Each one was ruled by a governor, or myowun, appointed by the Hlutdaw or by the king, and armed with full powers, military, judicial, civil, and fiscal. Appeals might be sent from his decisions to the Hlut, but otherwise he was entirely irresponsible, as long as he was regular in forwarding the prescribed revenue to the myosa, the prince or princess, or other great personage who "ate" the province. The "town-eater" almost never went to his district, so that it was entirely at the mercy of the myowun, and might be squeezed by him as much as he thought proper and judicious. The subordinate officials varied in different provinces according to their requirements. All, however, had myosayes, secretaries, or town-clerks, nahkandaws, "receivers of the royal orders," and sikkès, chiefs in war, military officers, who formed a provincial council or court holding daily sittings and making reports to the myowun. In some districts, according to the duties, there were in addition to these an akunwun, or revenue superintendent, an akaukwun, or collector of customs, as also in riparian districts a yewun, or myitsinwun, who had a jurisdiction over the entire river. This authority, however, very often vested in one of the governors. Thus the last Wun of Minhla had power of life and death, as high sheriff of the Irrawaddy, from his own town, close on the British frontier, right up to Sagaing, not far below Mandalay. Other officials were the htaunghmu, or jailer, the tagāhmu, governors of the gates, called windawhmu in the capital, where they were very important officers, and the ayatgaung, heads of quarters, in all the larger towns. Under each governor of a province were a number of governors of the separate towns under his jurisdiction. These were called myoôk when the appointment was temporary, or only for life, and myothugyi when it was hereditary, as was most frequently the case. Besides these, in some of the provinces there were taikthugyi, governors of circles or groups of villages, each of which had its own ywathugyi, who in turn had under him sundry gaungs to look after each his specially allotted number of houses. As each of these subordinates had to send in regularly to his

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

immediate superior a certain fixed sum, determined without regard to favourable seasons, health of the population, or anything of that kind, and as each man was judge over the people in his charge, it may naturally be supposed that the general population did not lead a very happy life. Complaints might be made against extortion and illegal decisions, but the heads of tracts, if they had the money, could always stifle inquiry.

Some of the laws deduced from Manu's eighteen original enactments strike one as being rather singular. For example, if two men quarrel and fight and one of them is killed, there is no penalty; but if a third party interferes and kills or injures one of the original combatants, he must pay the ordinary fine for murder, or causing hurt. Should he himself be killed, the other two are subject to no penalty. When a man is guilty of adultery with another man's wife, if it be proved to be the first time, he must pay the fine for adultery, usually the price of the woman, assessed according to the judge's opinion; if it is her second offence, he only pays half the fine; but if she has been guilty for a third time, he pays no penalty at all.

If one man curses another and some evil happens, he must pay twice the price of the damage incurred; thus, if the man dies he must pay twice the value of a man; two cows if a cow dies, and so on.

When the king dies there is a general pardon of all offences, and a remission of fines, except in the case of debt. There are also seven things which cannot be reclaimed after the death of the king under whom they were promised or given. These are:—1. Deposits. 2. Pledges. 3. Money paid wrongly by the parties in a law-suit. 4. Things carried off by violence, or seized upon without sufficient title. 5. Promises. 6. Things secretly stolen. 7. Things that have been voluntarily given up by one man and taken possession of by another.

The decisions of Mahawthata, Princess Thudhammasari, and others are of little value from a strictly legal point of view. They are chiefly of a religious character. The princess begins by saying that her cases are to be considered as guides to nobles and judges as to the line they

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

A state envelope was a very curious affair. It was nothing else but two large elephant's tusks. Half-way up they were hollow, and on the mouth there was a heavy gold cover. The tusks were mounted in different parts with gold of no mean thickness. The letter of the lord of the Golden Throne was deposited inside, and borne to its destination with the flourish of trumpets and the braying of drums. The majesty of the Burmese king would have suffered if he had forwarded a communication to the Viceroy in a cover which cost anything under a couple of hundred pounds sterling. In similar fashion the reports of subordinate officials were written with steatite pencils on coarse black paper, and this was rolled up and put in a hollow joint of bamboo. The whole was then enveloped in cloth and sealed with a peacock seal. Communications of this kind were sometimes received by English officials on the British Burma frontier.

The following are a few proverbs:—

If you want to go fast, go the old road.

Wisdom guards life; no one can escape bad luck. The man gifted with wisdom is never left in peace.

Every bird is handsome compared with the vulture.

A mountain is climbed by degrees; property acquired by degrees; wisdom learnt by degrees.

Have regard for a whole family of rats, instead of for one cat.

The more you know, the more luck you have.

A short boat is hard to steer; a dwarf is quick in the temper.

If a cock ruffles up his feathers, it is easy to pluck him. If a man gets angry he is done for.

Constant cutting dulls the knife; constant talking dulls the wits.

A pot half full of water is hard to carry (on the head, of course; because the water sways from side to side); the less a man knows, the harder he is to argue with.

A cow that can give no milk will kick. An ignorant man is to be feared for his ignorance.

If there is much paddy (unhusked rice) in the bowl, it is hard to eat. If there is much talking it is hard to understand.

16:Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 1898 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

CHAPTER VII

GOVERNMENT

'Fire, water, storms, robbers, rulers—these are the five great evils.'
—*Burmese saying.*

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IT would be difficult, I think, to imagine anything worse than the government of Upper Burma in its later days. I mean by 'government' the king and his counsellors and the greater officials of the empire. The management of foreign affairs, of the army, the suppression of greater crimes, the care of the means of communication, all those duties which fall to the central government, were badly done, if done at all. It must be remembered that there was one difficulty in the way—the absence of any noble or leisured class to be entrusted with the greater offices. As I have shown in another chapter, there was no one between the king and the villager—no noble, no landowner, no wealthy or educated class at all. The king had to seek for his ministers among the ordinary people, consequently the men who were called upon to fill great offices of state were as often as not men who had no experience beyond the narrow limits of a village.

16:Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 1898 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

647 643 The breadth of view, the knowledge of other countries, of other thoughts, that comes to those who have wealth and leisure, were wanting to these ministers of the king. Natural capacity many of them had, but that is not of much value until it is cultivated. You cannot learn in the narrow precincts of a village the knowledge necessary to the management of great affairs; and therefore in affairs of state this want of any noble or leisured class was a very serious loss to the government of Burma. It had great and countervailing advantages, of which I will speak when I come to local government, but that it was a heavy loss as far as the central government goes no one can doubt. There was none of that check upon the power of the king which a powerful nobility will give; there was no trained talent at his disposal. The king remained absolutely supreme, with no one near his throne, and the ministers were mere puppets, here to-day and gone to-morrow. They lived by the breath of the king and court, and when they lost favour there was none to help them. They had no faction behind them to uphold them against the king. It can easily be understood how disastrous all this was to any form of good government. All these ministers and governors were corrupt; there was corruption to the core.

647 652 When it is understood that hardly any official was paid, and that those who were paid were insufficiently paid, and had unlimited power, there will be no difficulty in seeing the reason. In circumstances like this all people would be corrupt. The only securities against bribery and abuse of power are adequate pay, restricted authority, and great publicity. None

16:Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 1898 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

of these obtained in Burma any more than in the Europe of five hundred years ago, and the result was the same in both. The central government consisted of the king, who had no limit at all to his power, and the council of ministers, whose only check was the king. The executive and judicial were all the same: there was no appeal from one to the other. The only appeal from the ministers was to the king, and as the king shut himself up in his palace, and was practically inaccessible to all but high officials, the worthlessness of this appeal is evident. Outside Mandalay the country was governed by *wuns* or governors. These were appointed by the king, or by the council, or by both, and they obtained their position by bribery. Their tenure was exceedingly insecure, as any man who came and gave a bigger bribe was likely to obtain the former governor's dismissal and his own appointment. Consequently the usual tenure of office of a governor was a year. Often there were half a dozen governors in a year; sometimes a man with strong influence managed to retain his position for some years. From the orders of the governor there was an appeal to the council. This was in some matters useful, but in others not so. If a governor sentenced a man to death—all governors had power of life and death—he would be executed long before an appeal could reach the council. Practically no check was possible by the palace over distant governors, and they did as they liked. Anything more disastrous and fatal to any kind of good government than this it is impossible to imagine. The governors did what they considered right in

16:Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 1898 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

586 'I did not know,' she said; 'I was hot-tempered. I was foolish. But now I know. Ah! the house is so lonely! I have but two ears, I have but two eyes, and the house is so large.'

But the husband refused again.

'What is done, is done. Marriage is not to be taken off and put on like a jacket. I have made up my mind.'

[762] Then he went away, and after a little the woman went away too. She went straight to the big, lonely house, and there she hanged herself.

You see, she loved him all the time, but did not know till too late.

Men do not often apply for divorce except for very good cause, and with their minds fully made up to obtain it. They do obtain it, of course.

586 177 647 With this facility for divorce, it is remarkable how uncommon it is. In the villages and amongst respectable Burmans in all classes of life it is a great exception to divorce or to be divorced. The only class amongst whom it is at all common is the class of hangers-on to our Administration, the clerks and policemen, and so on. I fear there is little that is good to be said of many of them. It is terrible to see how demoralizing our contact is to all sorts and conditions of men. To be attached to our Administration is almost a stigma of disreputableness. I remember remarking once to a headman that a certain official seemed to be quite regardless of public opinion in his life, and asked him if the villagers did not condemn him. And the headman [554] answered with surprise: 'But he is an official'; as if officials were quite *super grammaticam* of morals.

16:Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 1898 A[illegible] Burma
Burmese AP4

Yet this is the class from whom we most of us obtain our knowledge of Burmese life, whom we see most of, whose opinions we accept as reflecting the truth of Burmese thought. No wonder we are so often astray.

Amongst these, the taking of second, and even third, wives is not at all uncommon, and naturally divorce often follows. Among the great mass of the people it is very uncommon. I cannot give any figures. There are no records kept of marriage or of divorce. What the proportion is it is impossible to even guess. I have heard all sorts of estimates, none founded on more than imagination. I have even tried to find out in small villages what the number of divorces were in a year, and tried to estimate from this the percentage. I made it from 2 to 5 per cent. of the marriages. But I cannot offer these figures as correct for any large area. Probably they vary from place to place and from year to year. In the old time the queen was very strict upon the point. As she would allow no other wife to her king, so she would allow no taking of other wives, no abuse of divorce among her subjects. Whatever her influence may have been in other ways, here it was all for good. But the queen has gone, and there is no one left at all. No one but the hangers-on of whom I have spoken, examples not to be followed, but to be shunned.

But of this there is no manner of doubt, that this freedom of marriage and divorce leads to no license. There is no confusion between marriage or non-marriage, and even yet public opinion is a very great check upon divorce. It is not considered right to

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day on the calendar but the second phongyi decided to embark anyway. Both phongyis were lost when the boat sank that day.

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The revered position of phongyis is open to all regardless of birth or position. It is felt that some take up the robe because they are unsuccessful in life, or wish an "easy living" - but perhaps this attitude is one of modern sophisticates. Certainly the dominant position of the brotherhood is unchallenged. Occasionally differences arise between the headman and the phongyis of a village. But the phongyis invariably prevail. Offending laymen can be "deprived the gate of heaven" by phongyis refusing to accept HSOON, alms, from th This is called inverting the begging bowl THA-BEIT-MAUK-TAI (Begging bowl-upturn) and is the current phrase for any sort of a "strike".

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Some unprincipalled phongyis have sought to enrich themselves by accepting gifts of land or other property, or by selling gifts for money to traders. When they leave the brotherhood and become laymen again this property become theirs. Such occurences appear to be rare and are controlled by stipulations of the givers. For example a donor would hesitate to give paddy land to a suspected phongyi but might agree to giving the crops while retaining title.

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The government or administrative class is looked up to with great respect - in part a carry over from the days of royalty, in part an attitude towards power and influence. However, while the villager today may not know the details of the new constitution he knows there is a "code" wherein he can secure impartial justice.

Zi: Htin Aung B-6 (ca. 1960) 1967 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

drama. In 1916 I saw a *Nibbatibhin* at the obscure town of Pauk. For this period, I am greatly indebted to the notes made by my father. They are the results of inquiries and researches spread over a period of forty or fifty years. I realize that to many European scholars the section on the *Nibbatibhin* must appear conjectural in its dependence on tradition. My plea is that at present there is nothing else to depend on.[1]

With regard to the interlude, I am on surer ground. Again I depend much on tradition, but it is now tradition supported by evidence. Besides the general and common tradition, there is the tradition of the spirit mediums and actors, and, as I shall explain, the tradition of my own family.

Professional tradition of the mediums and actors is more reliable than common tradition because the two professions, especially the former, are closed fraternities, and as written records were never in use, they handed down the facts regarding the nature and history of their callings by word of mouth. To them oral tradition was as strong as written records. Moreover, their oral tradition can be checked by the stage conventions which exist at the present day. The various stage conventions are considered in Chapter VII.

The tradition in my family[2] begins from about the year 1800. About that time, an officer[3] in the victorious army of King Bodawpaya

[1] Even Harvey, who wrote his *History of Burma* at Exeter College, Oxford, often accepts oral tradition supported by no other evidence as substantially correct (*History of Burma*, pp. 33, 41, 211, 252, 267, 299). In two instances, pp. 33 and 41, the tradition cited dates back to the eleventh century A.D.

[2] My father is U Pein, District Magistrate, Burma Commission, now retired. In Burma, historical researches and inquiries are often made by administrative officials, as their duties carry them all over the country and to the remotest villages. Messrs Harvey, Stewart, Furnivall—great names in the Burma Research Society—are all officials belonging to the Burma Commission.

[3] He was Maha Minhla Mindin Raza.

I have to cite in this section the full names and official positions of some members of my family because:

1. As the Burmese use no surnames, my name alone would not convey anything regarding their identity.

2. The service record of the family may perhaps be construed as evidence in favour of the reliability of its tradition. G. E. Harvey, op. cit., p. 310 where he rejects Fuhrer's statement regarding an inscription because the 'precious slab has never been produced, and in view of Fuhrer's service record its production is essential.'

Zi: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

was appointed viceroy of the Seven Hill Districts of Mindon, situated between Arakan and the river Irrawaddy. It was during the Age of Triumph, the period when the native interlude and the Siamese-influenced court drama were being fused. At the miniature court of the viceroy were presented interludes and court plays, and *Hsaings* were publicly recited. In his palace,[1] a special apartment was built for the regular performance of plays and interludes, a special troupe of actors was taken under his patronage, and more famous troupes were often invited from the capital. In 1824 the unfortunate viceroy failed to stem the advance of the British forces, and he was executed and his palace burnt by royal order. From 1825 to 1852, the date of the second Anglo-Burmese war, Mindon was administered directly from the capital, and times were difficult; therefore dramatic performances at Mindon were few and far between. Though the son of the late viceroy was living, he wisely chose to leave the court, the administration of justice and politics alone, and as a result, he had neither the influence nor the wealth to patronize the drama. Therefore, as far as the drama was concerned, a gap resulted in the tradition of the family. In 1852 the British annexed the whole of Lower Burma, and Mindon passed into British hands. The viceroy's grandson was appointed chief administrative officer. This officer, my great-grandfather, took his office to be exactly similar in rank to that of his grand-sire, and though the British Government did not know of it—or the authorities at Rangoon did not care—he restored in effect the court of his grandfather, and dramatic performances were revived.[2] To him I am indebted for preserving much of the custom and tradition of the executed ancestor. To his revival of official performances of plays and interludes, I owe my information gathered from members of my family and the townspeople of Mindon. While the court poet, U Pon Nya, was further developing the drama, continuing the work of U Kyin U at the Burmese capital of Mandalay, in the out-of-the-way town of Mindon the interludes were still being performed. But it must not be supposed that Mindon was the only place where the interlude lived on. It survived in many places alongside the plays of the two great dramatists. But only from Mindon have I been able to obtain first-hand information and

[1] Though it was termed the 'palace', it was by no means a stately mansion or an imposing castle. Except for its gilded spires, emblems of the king's authority, it was just a big house of timber and bamboo with thatched roofs.

[2] He was U Sauk, Extra Assistant Commissioner.

21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

accounts regarding it. Apart from the notes gathered by my father, I base my information on the accounts given to me orally by my grandmother and grand-aunts who actually saw the interludes performed.

In support of the oral tradition regarding the nature of the interlude, there are some echoes of it in the plays of U Kyin U. He developed the interlude into a proper play, but the change was not a sudden one, and in his plays we find echoes of the interlude in its various stages. His plays are considered in detail in another chapter. There are also contemporary references to the interlude. Even from an English pen we have an account. Colonel Yule in 1855 saw an entertainment midway between the interlude and the developed plays of U Kyin U.[1]

The period of the court plays offers an easier task for research. The *Rama* play from Siam is preserved, with adaptations, it is true, but with notes on the original when a change was made in the preserved version.[2] The other Siamese play of *Eenaung* has come down to us. The poem *Rama-yagan* which Burmanized the *Rama* story has also come down. Accounts of the performances of the court plays and the recitation of the poem at court are many and well known. From the time when they were first composed down to the present day, the works of these court poets and dramatists have been studied and read. The influence of these works on the interlude is suggested, not only by the 'internal evidence' in U Kyin U's plays, but also by the editorial prefaces to the works in their various editions.

Though only three plays of U Kyin U exist at the present day as far as is known, the period is quite easy of research, because references and notes regarding him occur in various records of the court and the nobility, and because the Burma Research Society has published new editions of two of his plays; and though the prefaces to them are short and no attempt is made to make a complete study, suggestions for further study and research are made by the editors.

The period of U Pon Nya offers the easiest task, as compared with other periods, so far as research is concerned. All his plays are

[1] H. Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855*. His description of the dramatic entertainment he saw is considered again in the next chapter in connexion with Sir William Ridgeway's theory of the development of the Burmese drama.

[2] There is a copy of the *Rama* play in the British Museum. It is wrongly catalogued as by U Ka, who was only the editor. All these plays and the poems have been printed again and again, and are easily obtainable in Burma.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

574. OFFICIAL PASSING THE STREET.

representatives they are, attaining their position by the tacit suffrages of the public. Their sphere is not defined nor are their numbers fixed in any way. Influence is naturally centred in a few of the ablest, but these are not permitted to usurp it for themselves. The loyalty of the villagers rests on the reciprocal regard of the elders for the sentiments of the community; the *lûdyis*, though they moderate popular feeling, never take an unpopular course. The affairs which they manage are the local festivals and the religious undertakings in which the public life of the country centres and in which conflicting aims have to be conciliated. The laying out of ordinary irrigation channels and other village works are arranged by the *lûdyis*. They witness marriages and divorces, and generally regulate the social life of the people. A tacit agreement, parallel to that between the villagers and their headmen, bound the king and the people, whose sentiments were reflected by officials drawn from their midst.

If, not content with the consideration accruing through age and natural gifts for leadership, and with managing a business of his own, our Burman aspired to a public career, he might enter official life by attaching himself to the suite of some functionary. This he would do at first in a menial capacity, and, as he found favour, he might become secretary, deputy, and eventually attain to the chief dignities. A scion of royalty just out of his teens would be given a town or province to live on (*myosa*), as well as to govern by the help of deputies and advisers. But a son of the people would be gray before he climbed to such a position. The *myosa* had to remit a

575. BURMAN JUDGE PROCEEDING TO COURT.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

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376. JUDGE PRESIDING IN COURT (YON).

fixed annual revenue to the treasury, and he retained such excess as he could raise for himself. Even more cynical than the appellation of *myoza*, but nevertheless officially accepted, is that of his deputy, *thwethauttyi*, or bloodsucker. The revenue exactions were variable, and were levied with little regularity; outlying localities escaped altogether. The people of such places were almost without ostensible govern-

[651] ment. The 3-rupee household tax of 1862 had advanced to 10 Rs. in 1886 (*Thathameda*). There were also special imposts and special exemptions. The original style and address of the king came to be adopted by his deputies, as more high-sounding titles were devised for him. Every officer is now addressed *Payà* and spoken of as *min*, which means ruler, prince. The full style of high officials used to occupy several lines of a document; there were the traditional titles of the office and territory, the prerogatives granted by the king, conspicuous among which were the number of red and gold umbrellas allotted to the rank, and the executive powers, such as *dâbaing*, holder of the sword. The last-named symbol was borne before the officer as arbiter of life. The lower grades of office were, and in many places still are, hereditary, especially that of *thadyt*, the appointed headman who levies the taxes from the people (literally the poor, *sinyètha*). The Burmese correlative of *official* is significant; no matter how wealthy he be, one who holds no office is a "poor" man—at the mercy of the *asòya*. If the rapacity of an official under the old *régime* grew intolerable, he incurred the risk of assassination, without much likelihood of being avenged by the central authority. The religious aversion to be

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[349]

377. THE CITY GATE (PYA-O).

25; Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

378. THE PALACE GARDENS.

the cause of suffering and death, and the discredit reflected on officialdom by its methods, lead the best elements of the population to shun office, as a touching of pitch. The dearth of ability and character in the governing classes leaves the governed without efficient protection. The religious motive further operates in withholding information about criminals.

A pregnant category is that of the "five enemies"—Fire, Water, Robbers, Rulers, Ill-wishers. The governors and deputies who acted as judges heard causes at the *yôn*, an open shed in a public place. But every cause was presented in the first instance at the house of the official, and it is contrary to accepted ideas of politeness to approach a superior empty-handed, even on a mere visit of courtesy. The *pros* and *cons* of the case were understood before the regular hearing. At the hearing, the advocates of the parties (*ashé-ne*) publicly presented their pleas and the evidence was recorded. The Burmese form of oath is to take the *kyanza* in the hands, a book of imprecations which the witness invokes on his head if he should speak falsely. The judge or judges intimated their finding to their clerks (*sayé*), who recorded it in official style and read it out. The punishments awarded to criminals and the condition of prisoners were much like those prevailing in Europe at the time of the Renaissance. Every judgment of importance was registered in the *Hluttaw* or chancellery at the capital, presided over by the four chief ministers (*Wundyi*), through whom all royal commands to the governors of provinces issued. There was no regular system of appeals. The Hindu code of Manú served as a body of law, and statutes were decreed by the kings; but *thnsan* (custom) supplied standards of a more practical and stable nature.

379. ROYAL MAID OF HONOUR (APYODAW).

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

388. ROYAL INSIGNIA.

supervision, are combined into a district under a European magistrate, the Deputy Commissioner, who has a European officer for district superintendent of police, commanding an average force of four hundred native constables. At the district headquarters are a police-depôt, treasury, jail and hospital, besides courthouses and offices. The district officer hears appeals from the *myôôks*, and tries all offences except the gravest and heavy civil suits. This organisation is the backbone of the civil government, the 'Commission.' There are thirty-six such districts, and four hundred native magistrates, on salaries of one hundred to eight hundred rupees a month, besides one hundred and twenty-five native honorary magistrates. The success of this economical administration, organised by Sir Arthur Phayre, in ensuring the safety of life and property and the fulfilment of contracts has given a new value to enterprise and thrift. The British garrison of Burma in 1900 consisted of three thousand European and seven thousand five hundred Indian regular troops.

To return to native Burma—In the centre of the capital, and by euphemism of creation, rises the *pyatthat* which canopies the principal throne in the great hall of audience, where envoys and tributary princes used to be received. Here also the princes of his own blood and the high officers of state paid court to the king on *gaddaw-ne*, days when they craved pardon of the king for their shortcomings. The throne (No. 1) is ascended by a stair at the back, leading from the council-room of the king's cabinet of palace ministers, who were the medium of communication with the *Hluttaw*. On such occa-

388. ANCIENT CAPITAL, BAGAING.